

VZCZCXRO9459
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1433/01 1171342
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271342Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0936
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001433

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: FADHILA LEADER SHARES PLAN FOR CREATING MORE
EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

Creating a More Effective Opposition

¶1. (C) Council of Representatives (CoR) member and Fadhila bloc leader Hassan al-Shammari shared with PolCouns on April 24 Fadhila's plan to create a more effective opposition to the Maliki government. Al-Shammari characterized the government as weak and corrupt, but acknowledged that the CoR was currently unable to play an effective oversight role. Fadhila's plan, which al-Shammari said Fadhila had discussed with Sunnis inside and outside Iraq as well as with Masoud Barzani and some groups within the Shi'a coalition, was to increase the number of seats in parliament and offer the new seats to opposition groups currently outside the political process. Thus bolstered and "balanced", opposition parties in the CoR would be able to act as a check on the sectarian nature of the Maliki government. Al-Shammari said Fadhila had talked with Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, who acknowledged the need for a change but had not agreed to any mechanism. Al-Shammari said he planned to travel to Cairo in advance of the Neighbors conference to propose Fadhila's ideas to Arab representatives as a way of furthering the process of national reconciliation.

¶3. (C) Al-Shammari identified several areas in the government that needed immediate attention: administrative corruption and Iraq's security institutions. Bringing in more technocratic ministers would be a good step, he said, but the harder and more important challenge would be to root out the party operatives that truly controlled the ministries at the director general, inspector general, and similar levels. These positions, he said, had generally gone to people affiliated with Dawa, SCIRI, or the Sadrists. Some groups within the security institutions, he implied, were also more loyal to party than to Iraq. He noted that Arab countries were also deeply concerned about Iranian infiltration in Iraq's security and intelligence services.

Basrah: Ganging up on Fadhila

¶4. (C) Turning to Basrah, al-Shammari said that the recent agitation against the governor (from the Fadhila party) did not stem from lack of services, as the agitators claimed, but rather from Fadhila's withdrawal from the UIC. "There are 20 hours of electricity in Basrah," al-Shammari claimed. "Services are not the issue. The real issue is Fadhila's withdrawal from the Shi'a coalition and the fear of others that Fadhila might join another front." Iran, he said, supported Thar Allah, Sayyid al-Shuhada, and some groups within the Sadrists and SCIRI/Badr. He posited that the British were taking a hands-off approach to current political violence in Basrah as part of a deal with Iran for the return

of the British sailors.

Oil Law and Other Issues

15. (C) On the hydrocarbon law, al-Shammari said that Fadhila would generally support it but wanted to see a stronger role for the central government in several areas. He gave the example of reviewing contracts, saying that it was too high a bar to expect consensus from the federal review body in order to decide the issue at the federal level. Al-Shammari said that provincial elections could be helpful if there were changes in the electoral system away from the closed list system and if violence and outside support, e.g. from Iran, could be contained. He characterized the constitutional review committee, of which he is a member, as "not very serious," partly because everyone realized that the mechanism for amending the constitution would make it very hard for significant changes.

Comment

16. (C) Fadhila is clearly aggressively courting Sunni Arab allies within and outside of Iraq. Al-Shammari's analysis of the situation, namely that violence in Iraq will not subside until there is a new political arrangement that accommodates voices not currently in the political process, would be shared by many Sunnis but is the opposite of what we have heard from Dawa and SCIRI/Badr leaders recently. The mechanism al-Shammari proposed for accommodating these voices and changing the balance in the CoR is an unlikely one. He

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suggested that perhaps through the constitutional review process (which he otherwise considered unlikely to produce results) an additional 13 seats could be added to the CoR, in proportion to the gap between census figures and Iraq's actual population, and dispersed among opposition groups. Although this mechanism seems impractical, we expect that al-Shammari will get a reasonably warm reception to his basic premise during his time in Egypt and perhaps other Arab states. End comment.
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